

ABSTRACT
SOCIAL WORK

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A STUDY OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

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Thesis Dated: May, 1991

The overall objective of this study was to present factors which contribute to marital satisfaction. To attain this objective the following areas were addressed: (a) age, (b) education, (c) employment, (d) income, (e) perception of marriage, (f) self esteem, (g) depression, (h) clinical stress.

A descriptive questionnaire was used for this study. A convenient sample of 31 females and 32 males from Atlanta, Georgia, Washington, D.C. and Shreveport, Louisiana were used. The study found that (1) there was a statistical significant relationship between employment and income; (2) there was no statistical significant relationship between age, education, perception of marriage, self esteem, depression and clinical stress.

A STUDY OF MARITAL SATISFACTION
AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY
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SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY, 1991

R.IV.T.69

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express thanks to Dr. Melvin Williams, Thesis Advisor, for his time and assistance throughout this research. Thanks also to Dr. Amos Ajo for his guidance and efforts in completing this study.

To my son, Gregory, a special thanks is extended for the understanding and encouragement throughout this endeavor. Thanks is extended to all my friends and relatives who provided me with emotional and financial support.

To Alan, Francine, Lisa and all of the people who so graciously participated in this study - Thanks! I couldn't have done it without you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The African American family has been subjected to more change than the family of any other racial or nationally group (Burgess, Locke, and Thomas, 1963). During the last twenty years some of the changes have been for the better and some for the worse (Ladner, 1990). Tucker (1989) maintains that the structure of relationships between African-American women and men has changed quite dramatically over the past two decades.

Guided by different perspectives while using the same data, black and white scientists often differ on the nature of Black family life and the direction social policies should take (Johnson, 1981). Moynihan (1965) reported a deteriorating black family and recommended social policies that would encourage changes in the Black family's structure and values. Hill (1972) observed the resilience of Black families and recommended social policies that could build on the strengths of Black family values and structure.

Given the difficulties faced by black families, factors that contribute to satisfaction with family

(Broman, 1988).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Perhaps no topic generates more lively debate among students of the black community than the state of relationships between black males and females. At least one set of statistics, those that show the decline in the black marriage rate, indicates that the concern with the nature of these relationships is well founded. In 1970, 64% of blacks aged 18 years and older were married; by 1982 this figure had decreased to 49.9% (Zollar and Williams, 1987). Norton and Moorman (1987) report that between 1975 and 1985 the proportion of black women who had never married declined sharply from nearly 80% to 65% and the percentage of divorced black women increased from 22% to 31% (Taylor, Chatters, Tucker and Lewis, 1990).

Today, perhaps as never before, the quality of family life is of pressing social concern. Contemporary families are besieged with internal as well as external stresses, as evidenced by demographic changes such as increased divorce rates, number of reconstituted families (Pittman, and Lloyd, 1988), and changes in labor force status. Furthermore, evidence

from various research studies on changes in sex role attitudes, behaviors, and decision making patterns among married couples indicates that the institution of marriage is in a state of transition (Balthazar, 1988). Stable families and communities are absolutely necessary if African Americans are to be productive and loving individuals. Marriage represents the foundation of family (Madhubuti, 1990).

Broman (1988) conducted research which reported that the demands of household labor play an important role in feeling satisfied among married black adults. This is an important issue in family stability among black Americans, as conflict over work-family roles and the household division of labor might increase the likelihood of divorce. White (1990) states that black Americans are more likely than white Americans to divorce and that the difference is strong and consistent. Furthermore, the accounts that men and women offer for their divorces differ substantially and many of the issues that divide marriages, such as division of labor, are gender related (White, 1990).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Describing and explaining the division of household labor has been a focus of research on gender and the family in recent years. While this research has contributed greatly to our understanding of the factors affecting the actual division of household responsibilities, it has shed little insight into explaining the satisfaction men and women experience with the division of household labor, or the effects of that satisfaction on marital satisfaction (Suitor, 1991).

This study was designed to acquire a more accurate picture of how married African Americans feel about their household responsibilities, and an understanding and awareness of factors that are present when they are happy with their married life. By exploring this area it is hoped that a significant contribution will be made to the enhancement of clinical practice and research in the field of human relationships; as well as provide information about the life styles and challenges facing African American couples today.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Staples (1985) the basis of a stable family rests on the willingness and ability of men and women to marry, bear and rear children, and fulfill socially prescribed familial roles.

In 1979-1980 the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan conducted a study called the National Survey of Black American. The population interviewed included eight hundred and seventy six married persons. The socio-demographic measures used were age, sex, education, family income, employment status, health problems, and social participation levels. Broman (1988) used data from this study to examine the issue of division of household labor and family life satisfaction.

The first set of results showed the relationship between household labor variables and sex. The results indicated that most often women perform most of the household tasks and are almost twice as likely as men to say they feel overworked in all situations. The relationship was statistically significant. A second set of results were compiled for analysis of family

life satisfaction levels. It was determined that people are more likely to have high levels of satisfaction with their family life if someone else does most of the household labor. However, the relationship was not significant (Broman, 1988).

Next, the significance of household labor variables in family life satisfaction while controlling for sociodemographic variables were analyzed. The results indicated that age, education, and health problems are significant predictors of satisfaction with family life among married black adults. Health problems and high(er) education lowered family life satisfaction and being older in age raised family life satisfaction. Employment status did not significantly predict satisfaction with one's family life. The fourth set of results showed that the relationship between family life satisfaction and doing most of the household chores differs across sex and employment status. Black men who do most of the household work have significantly lower levels of satisfaction than those who do not. So also do employed people who do most of the household work. Further analysis was performed to examine the possibility that the

interaction between employment status, performing most household obligations, and family life satisfaction might differ by sex. The results indicated no significant difference (Broman, 1988).

Balthazar (1988) conducted a study in which Division of household labor was analyzed as a behavioral indicator of traditionalism or modernity among husband and wives. Results indicated that Black husbands and wives perceived the division of household labor as modern, while white husbands and wives received it as traditional. Although the black spouses reflected traditional attitudes toward women's roles in society, they perceived their household labor as modern (Balthazar, 1988).

Zollar and Williams (1987) found that among married black persons, men tend to report greater marital happiness than women. The effect of satisfaction with the division of household labor on marital quality has received relatively little attention in the literature (Suitor, 1991). However, the few studies which have addressed this issue have found a positive relationship between satisfaction and

household responsibilities and marital quality (Pleck, 1985).

Pittman and Lloyd (1988) cite Spanier and Lewis (1980) who conducted a study which indicated marital satisfaction is related to several socioeconomic and demographic factors, including household income, education, and age at marriage. However, the results of a study conducted by Yogev and Bratt (1985) indicate the following: there are significant relationships between marital satisfaction and perception of the distribution of housework and child care; there is no relationship between marital satisfaction and family income, age, educational level and sex.

Benin and Nienstedt (1985) conducted research on marital happiness, job satisfaction and life cycle. The findings indicate that education was not a significant contributor to happiness; job satisfaction contributes positively to marital satisfaction.

Ball and Robbins (1986) examined the relationships of marital status and other factors and life satisfaction among African Americans. The results indicated that the relationship varies by sex. For black women, age, social participation, health, and

income measurement were positively related to life satisfaction. For black men, health, the income measurement and marital status were positively related to life satisfaction (Broman, 1988).

Research by Beckett and Smith (1981) suggested that the division of family roles into stereotypically male versus female roles is more characteristic of white families than black. Black women are less likely than white women to perform the household tasks exclusively (Marot and Finley, 1984). Since employment status of the wife affects the household division of labor, the fact that black women have historically been more likely to be labor force participants than white women, plays an important role (Wallace, 1980). Empirical research by Veroff, Douvan and Kulka (1981) found that marital happiness among wives is increased when household tasks are shared. Other research findings report that women have lower levels of depression when chores are shared (Broman, 1988).

Bernard (1972) maintains that marriage is distinctly beneficial to husbands not to wives. She believes that a wide variety of emotional disorders in women can be attributed to marriage and has suggested

that until the institution of marriage has been reformed from its traditional pattern, it is wiser for women not to marry. Data analyzed by Zollar and Williams (1987) showed that among married black persons, men tend to report greater marital happiness than women.

Price-Bonham and Murphy (1980) have reported that spouses who are not satisfied with the distribution of family work also are not satisfied with marriage. Findings by Suitor 1991) concurred with other research; that is, satisfaction with the division of labor was associated with greater marital happiness and lower marital conflict. Satisfaction with the division of labor was more consistently related to marital happiness for women and men than were age, educational level or number of hours worked per week by the wife.

Research by Beckett and Smith (1981) indicates that gender distinctions in the provider and homemaker roles are not as rigid in Black families as they are in White families. Ross (1987) states that greater levels of egalitarianism in the division of household labor among African American couples is maintained when the analysis controls for wife's employment status and sex-

role attitudes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature review suggests that Exchange Theory is the theoretical perspective from which family life is best analyzed. This theory focuses on the reinforcement patterns, the history of rewards and costs, that lead people to do what they do (Staples, 1985). The relationship between husband and wife can be thought of in terms of a reciprocal exchange of role duties and rights (Scanzoni and Szinovacz, 1980).

Exchange Theory argues that people will continue to do what they have found to be rewarding in the past. The basic premise is that certain kinds of family structures exist when there is an exchange of rewards and that family arrangements which are costly to one or both parties are not likely to continue (Staples, 1985). According to Scanzoni (1977), "increased reciprocal rewards strengthen the bonds of a relationship and decreased rewards weaken it" (p.112).

Exchange Theory has been used to help clarify a variety of family relations and has been shown to be useful in predicting life cycle variations in satisfaction with the division of household labor

(Suitor, 1991).

This study is also approached from The Afrocentric perspective of the Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work. This perspective places primacy on the strengths and uniqueness of differential population groups and dictates service response patterns which respect the cultural integrity of affected populations. This perspective transcends the conventional pathological view that Black, poor and oppressed people, experience social dysfunctioning because of internal deficits in character. It places emphasis on the uniqueness and strengths of different population groups and dictates services with respect to different cultures (Beverly and Yabura, 1985).

Culture refers to the totality of the ways of life of a people. In regards to African Americans, specifically, it includes the conditions of existence, behavior, style of life, values, preferences, and creative expressions that emanate from work and play (Billingsley, 1985). Billingsley further states that Black family life and Black culture are so heavily interrelated that it is difficult to think of one without the other.

The literature has shown that marital behavior among African Americans has changed. Staples (1987) contends that both women and men have anti marriage attitudes indicative of strong disaffection with the institution of marriage. While many African Americans fail to marry, history shows only a minority surviving a lifetime with the same people.

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

- Hypothesis 1. There is a significant relationship between age and marital satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 2. There is a significant relationship between educational level and marital satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 3. There is a significant relationship between employment and marital satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 4. There is a significant relationship between income and marital satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 5. There is a significant relationship between perception of marriage and marital satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 6. There is a significant relationship between self esteem and marital

satisfaction.

Hypothesis 7. There is a significant relationship between depression and marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 8. There is a significant relationship between clinical stress and marital satisfaction.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Family - a primary group whose members are related by blood, adoption or marriage and have shared common residence, mutual rights and obligations and responsibility for the primary socialization of their children. Families are important because they provide vision and wisdom, historical perspective and continuity, pride and glory, nurturing and love, self-worth and pride, and determination and strength (Singleton, 1985).

African American - an American black of African decent.

Tradition - handed down by tradition; conforming to earlier styles or customs. Tradition implies that one has beliefs based on past experience or based on the beliefs and behavior of a significant person in his/her background.

Modern / Egalitarian - a social value; a belief in human equality leading one to trust others as equals/peers. In the marital relationship, the spouses feel equally responsible for accomplishing the household and childcare tasks.

Family Life Satisfaction - the contentment/pleasure one experiences with her/his spouse, children, home life.

Marital Satisfaction - fully supplying or gratifying wants or wishes; fulfillment of conditions or desires; of or having to do with marriage; being content or pleased with one's spousal subsystem.

Division of Household Labor - responsibilities one has as a member of a family. For the purposes of this study the tasks are divided into two categories: household tasks such as preparing meals, doing laundry; and childcare tasks, such as arranging for baby sitters and taking children to activities.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes the research design, the research sampling, data collection procedure, and the data analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A correlation design was used for this study. This design is used to display and/or measure relationships between variables.

SAMPLING

A convenient sample was used for this study. Married African Americans were solicited from Clark Atlanta University, St. Anthony's Catholic Church, and St Anthony's Child Care Center, all in Atlanta, Georgia. The sample population also included respondents from Shreveport, Louisiana and Washington, D.C. These settings were chosen because they were convenient for the researcher. The participants returned the completed questionnaire to a designated location or mailed it to the researcher.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

A descriptive questionnaire was used for the study. The first page was a cover letter explaining

the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was a 6 page document developed based on findings in the literature. It was divided into six sections: a) demographic information; b) health information; c) household responsibilities; d) childcare responsibilities; e) work; f) attitudes about changes. There were a total of 64 items. Also used were four measuring scales: The Generalized Contentment Scale, the Marital Satisfaction Index, the Index of Self Esteem and the Index of Clinical Stress. See Appendix A.

Section A of the questionnaire contained twenty three questions about the respondents background, such as age, sex, number of children and yearly income. Section B asked health related questions to determine if health had an impact on ability to perform responsibilities in the home. Section C was concerned with ascertaining who performed the various household tasks and Section D with who performed the various childcare tasks. Section E was concerned with how work obligations impact on the responsibilities in the home. Section F asked the respondents to rank order changes they would like to occur in the home.

The scales used in this study were designed to measure the degree, severity, or magnitude of a distinct social functioning (Hudson, 1982). The Generalized Contentment Scale Measures the degree of contentment one feels with their life and surroundings. This scale has a reliability coefficient of .92, as reported by Hudson (1982). The Index of Marital Satisfaction was designed to measure the degree, severity, or magnitude of a problem a spouse has in the marital relationship. This scale has reliability coefficient of .96, as reported by Hudson (1982). The degree, severity, or magnitude of a problem one has with self esteem is measured with the Index of Self Esteem. This scale has a reliability scale coefficient of .93, as reported by Hudson (1982). The degree of stress one is experiencing was measured by using the Index of Clinical Stress. This scale has a reliability scale of .90, as reported by Hudson (1982).

DATA ANALYSIS

In this study bivariate analyses using Pearson r was used for the analysis of the dependent variable and each of the independent variables. In addition descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions

and percentages were used for data analysis of the demographic information. These procedures were accomplished through the use of SPSSX batch systems.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This chapter presents the statistical analysis and discussion of the data for this study. It is subdivided into three section: 1. Demographic Data; 2. Household Labor; 3. Testing of the Hypotheses.

The demographic findings are presented as follows: sex, age, marital status, educational level, employment, yearly income, religion. Table 1 represents a frequency distribution of the demographic characterisitcs of the sample.

The demographics revealed that the typical respondent had mean age of 38.048 and had been married 2.8 years. Seventy seven point eight percent (77.8%) of the population were in their first marriage. The respondents indicated that 81.0% of them worked full time with 46.0% of them earning at least \$37,000 yearly. 50.8% of the sample had a Bachelor degree and 31.7% had Graduate degrees. The majority of the respondents were Baptist.

Frequency distribution of perception of marriage by gender is shown in Table 2. When asked to respond to a level of satisfaction with their family life,

72.7% of the men reported "very satisfied". These men perceived their marriages to be modern/egalitarian. The men did not select any of the dissatisfied options, whereas the women did.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Demographic Data

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
-----------------	------------------	----------------

Sex

Female	31	49.2
Male	<u>32</u>	<u>50.8</u>
Total	63	100.0

Age

28-32 years	12	19.3
33-38 "	16	25.9
39-43 "	26	40.4
44-48 "	<u>9</u>	<u>14.4</u>
Total	63	100.0

Marital Status

First Marriage	49	77.8
Second Marriage	10	15.9
Other	<u>4</u>	<u>6.3</u>
Total	63	100.0

Educational Level

Below Fifth Grade	-	-
6-8 Grade	-	-
9-11 Grade	-	-
High School/GED	1	1.6

Table 1 continued

Frequency Distribution of Demographic Data

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Some College		
/Business School	10	15.9
Bachelor Degree	32	50.8
Graduate Degree	20	31.7
Total	63	100.0
<u>Employment</u>		
Yes	48	76.2
No	4	6.3
No Answer	<u>11</u>	<u>17.5</u>
Total	63	100.0
<u>Yearly Income</u>		
\$12,000 - 16,999	4	6.3
\$17,000 - 21,999	4	6.3
\$22,000 - 26,999	10	15.9
\$27,000 - 31,999	7	11.1
\$32,000 - 36,999	2	3.2
\$37,000 - plus	29	46.0
Missing	<u>7</u>	<u>11.1</u>

Table 1 continued

Frequency Distribution of Demographic Data

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<u>Religion</u>		
Baptist	25	39.7
Catholic	14	22.2
Methodist	11	17.5
Non Denomination	5	7.9
Other	<u>8</u>	<u>12.7</u>
Total	63	100.0

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of Perception of Marriage by
Gender

	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>	
<u>Perception of Marriage</u>	N	%	N	%
Modern/Egalitarian	15	48.4	19	59.4
Traditional	12	38.7	13	40.6
	4 missing			

HOUSEHOLD LABOR

In this section the division of labor is divided into two categories: a) Household and Responsibilities; b) Child Care Responsibilities.

Household Responsibilities

Table 3 represents household responsibilities by gender. Table 3 divides household responsibilities into nine (9) sections. A crosstabulation was used to illustrate frequency and percent of the female and male responses to questions pertaining to who performed various tasks within the home.

The majority of the female respondents indicated that they prepared the meals, shopped for groceries and washed clothes. They indicated that the responsibility was shared in regards to household cleaning tasks, paying bills, making decisions about major purchases, where to live and how to spend the money.

The majority of male respondents indicated that his spouse prepared the meals. However, he shared in the grocery shopping, laundry, household cleaning, and paying bills. He also shared in making decisions about major purchases, where to live and how to spend the money.

These results indicate agreement by the respondents on who prepares the meals most of the time. However, they were not in agreement in regards to the performance of the other household tasks.

Child Care Responsibilities

Table 4 represents childhood responsibility by gender. Table 4 divides child care responsibilities into six (6) sections. A crosstabulation was used to illustrate frequency and percent of the female and male responses to questions pertaining to who performed various tasks relating to child care within the home.

The results of the child care responsibilities analysis indicates that the female and male respondents shared in all aspects concerning child care. This finding suggests that men are willing to perform child care tasks but are reluctant to perform household tasks. These results concur with the literature, which says that women, even though they work, still perform most of the household tasks.

Table 5 presents a crosstabulation of the females responses to satisfaction with Family Life by Perception of Marriage. Table 6 presents a cross

tabulation of the male responses to satisfaction with Family by Perception of Marriage.

This analysis was performed in order to show what the perception of marriage was for respondents based on the degree of satisfaction with family life that they experience.

Table 7 shows how the respondents rank ordered changes they would like in their lives. In regard to attitude about desired changes, both females and males rated improving relationship with spouse as the first most important change.

Table 3

Household Responsibilities by Gender

	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>	
<u>Meal Preparation</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
I Do	17	54.8	1	3.1
Spouse Does	1	3.2	18	56.3
Shared Responsibility	11	35.5	13	40.6
Other	2	6.4	-	-
<u>Grocery Shopping</u>				
I Do	20	64.5	4	12.5
Spouse Does	2	6.5	10	31.3
Shared Responsibility	9	29.0	16	50.0
Other	-	-	-	-
<u>Laundry</u>				
I Do	16	51.6	1	3.1
Spouse Does	2	6.5	14	43.8
Shared Responsibility	13	41.9	17	53.1
Other	-	-	-	-
<u>Household Cleaning</u>				
I Do	14	45.2	1	3.1
Spouse Does	-	-	8	25.0
Shared Responsibility	16	51.6	21	65.6
Other	1	3.2	2	6.2

Table 3 continued

Household Responsibilities by Gender

	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Writing Checks to Pay Bills</u>				
I Do	10	32.3	7	21.9
Spouse Does	3	9.7	9	28.1
Shared Responsibility	18	58.1	1	3.1
Other	-	-	-	-
<u>Deciding About Major Purchases</u>				
I Do	3	9.7	1	3.1
Spouse Does	2	6.5	-	-
Shared Responsibility	26	83.9	31	96.9
<u>Deciding Where You Live</u>				
I Do	1	3.2	-	-
Spouse Does	1	3.2	2	6.3
Shared Responsibility	29	93.5	29	90.6
Other	-	-	1	3.1
<u>Deciding to Relocate</u>				
I Do	2	3.2	1	3.1
Spouse Does	2	3.2	1	3.1
Shared Responsibility	25	39.7	30	93.8

Table 3 continued

Household Responsibilities by Gender

	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Deciding How to Spend Money</u>				
I Do	5	16.1	-	-
Spouse Does	1	3.2	1	3.1
Shared Responsibility	25	80.6	31	96.9
Other				

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of Child Care Responsibilities by

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Decide Type of Child Care to Use</u>				
I Do	13	43.3	-	-
Spouse Does	-	-	6	19.4
Shared Responsibility	17	56.7	25	80.6
Other	--	-	-	-
<u>Taking Children To & From School</u>				
I Do	11	37.9	2	6.7
Spouse Does	3	10.3	7	23.3
Shared Responsibility	15	51.7	21	70.0
Other	-	-	-	-
<u>Taking Children To & From Extracurricular Activities</u>				
I Do	11	43.3	-	-
Spouse Does	-	-	7	21.9
Shared Responsibility	17	56.7	25	78.1
Other	-	-	-	-
<u>Provides Discipline</u>				
I Do	6	19.4	1	3.1
Spouse Does	-	-	1	3.1
Shared Responsibility	25	80.6	30	93.8

Table 4 continued

Frequency Distribution of Child Care Responsibilities by

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Other	-	-	-	-
<u>Staying Home To Care For Sick Children</u>				
I Do	13	41.9	-	-
Spouse Does	1	3.2	12	37.5
Shared Responsibility	17	54.8	20	62.5
Other	-	-	-	-
<u>Taking Children to Doctor/Dentist</u>				
I Do	8	25.8	-	-
Spouse Does	-	-	13	40.6
Shared Responsibility	22	71.0	19	59.4
Other	1	3.2	-	-
<u>Taking Children to Doctor/Dentist</u>				
I Do	8	25.8	-	-
Spouse Does	-	-	13	40.6
Shared Responsibility	22	71.0	19	59.4
Other	1	3.2	-	-

Table 5

Crosstabulation Analysis of Female Satisfaction With
Family Life by Perception of Marriage

	<u>Modern/Egalitarian</u>		<u>Traditional</u>	
	N	%	N	%
Satisfied	4	44.4	5	55.6
Somewhat Satisfied	3	42.9	4	57.1
Very Satisfied	5	62.5	3	37.5
Somewhat Dissatisfied	2	100.0	-	-
Very Dissatisfied	1	100.0	-	-

Table 6

Crosstabulation Analysis of Male Satisfaction with Family
Life by Perception of Marriage

	<u>Modern/Egalitarian</u>		<u>Traditional</u>	
	N	%	N	%
Satisfied	5	50.0	6	50.0
Somewhat Satisfied	5	55.6	4	44.4
Very Satisfied	8	72.7	3	27.3

Table 7

Rank Order of Desired Changes by Gender

	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>
<u>Rank Order</u>	<u>Desired Change %</u>	<u>Desired Change %</u>
First most important change	Improve Relationship With Spouse 56%	Improve Relationship With Spouse 48.4%
Second Most important with Change	Return to School 22.6%	Improve Relationship Children 48.4%
Third Most School important Change	More Help Around The House 22.6%	Return to 16.1%

TESTING OF THE HYPOTHESES

Pearson r correlation and was used to analyze marital satisfaction and each of the independent variables within this study. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 8 and Table 9. The presenting factors are: age, yearly income, depression, self esteem, clinical stress, level of education, employment, religion, satisfaction with family life and perception of marriage. The hypotheses and the findings are follows.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relation between age and marital satisfaction.

Pearson r was used to test the hypothesis. This analysis indicates that there was no statistical significant relationship between age and marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2. There is a significant relationship between the level of education and marital satisfaction.

The Pearson r was used to test the hypothesis. This analysis revealed no statistical significant relationship; $r = .091$, $p = .49$.

Hypothesis 3. There is a significant relationship between employment and marital satisfaction.

The Pearson r was used to test the hypothesis.

There was a statistical significant relationship between employment and marital satisfaction;
 $r = .395$, $p = .004$.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between income and marital satisfaction.

Pearson r was used to test the hypothesis. There is a statistical significant relationship;
 $r = .302$, $p = .021$.

Hypothesis 5. There is a significant relationship between perception of marriage and marital satisfaction.

The Pearson r was used to test the hypothesis. This indicated no statistical significant relationship;
 $r = .153$, $p = .249$.

Hypothesis 6. There is a significant relationship between self esteem and marital satisfaction.

The Pearson's r was used to analyze the data. There is no statistical significant relationship between self esteem and marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 7. There is a significant relationship

between depression and marital satisfaction;

The Pearson r was in this analysis to show that there was no statistical significant relationship; $r = .045$, $p = .726$.

Hypothesis 8. There is a significant relationship between clinical stress and marital satisfaction.

The Pearson r was used in this analysis. No statistical significance was found; $r = .176$, $p. = .170$.

Table 8

Pearson Correlation Analysis of Marital Satisfaction by
Age, Income, Depression, Self Esteem, Stress

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Pearson r</u>	<u>Probability</u>
Age	.162	.211
Income	.302	*.021
Depression	.045	.726
Self Esteem	.089	.489
Clinical Stress	.176	.170

* Statistically significant at .05

Table 9

Pearson r Analysis of Marital Satisfaction by
Education, Employment, Religion, Satisfaction with
family Life, Perception of Marriage

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Pearson r</u>	<u>Probability</u>
Education	.091	.479
Employment	.395	*.004
Religion	.134	.299
Satisfaction with		
Family Life	.112	.384
Perception of		
Marriage	.153	.249

* Statistical significant at .05.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, and suggested research directions.

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The data in this study agreed with earlier research findings, specifically, there were no relationships between marital satisfaction and age, and educational level. The finding that income and employment had a significant statistical relationship with marital satisfaction also concurred with earlier studies. Results from this study also confirmed that men report greater marital satisfaction than women, as tested by Zollar and Williams.

It is interesting to note the changes the women and men ranked most important. The men ranked improving relationship with children as second most important, while the women did not select this at all. It could be that the women spend more time with the children and didn't have the need to be closer. However, this rationale might not be valid since both

husbands and wives agreed that childcare responsibilities are shared.

The results from this study revealed that 61.3% of the women often feel overworked. Five of the wives, or 16.1 %, say they feel over-worked daily. Whereas 59.4% of the husbands indicated that they seldom feel overworked.

The study asked the married African Americans to indicate whether their parents shared the responsibilities. Approximately 56% of the females said yes and 37.5% of the males said yes. This necessarily would have an influence on behavior and expectations of a spouse. Thirty four percent of the males replied no, which indicates that there is no big difference between the yes replies and the no replies of the husbands.

When asked about depression, 38.7% of the women indicated that they feel depressed once or more a year. When the men were asked about depression, 46.7% said that they feel depressed once or more a year. However, depression was not found to have a statistically significant relationship to marital satisfaction. The men indicated higher levels of depression and higher

levels of satisfaction with family life.

In regards to religion, 21.9% of the husbands attend services four times a month, and 34.4% of their spouses attend four times a month. The wives indicated that 38.7% attend services four times a month. They indicated that 48.4% of their spouses did not attend services monthly. These are interesting results. The husbands indicate regular attendance and the wives indicate that they do not attend. Only in one instance did the respondents indicate a different religious affiliation from the spouse. Thirty-nine percent were Baptist and 22.2% were Catholic.

In regards to health issues, 54.0% replied that health was good and did not prevent them from completing obligations. One of the work related questions asked respondent if they were able to handle work pressures and family. Thirty-two percent of the women agreed, and only 9.7% strongly agreed. Fifty-three percent of the husbands agreed and 15.6% strongly agreed. They apparently were more certain about this than the wives. Both wives and husbands indicated that the family did not suffer because of their work schedules.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following are limitations to the study: the sample size was small; the geographical areas were not equally represented; and the findings of this study can only be generalized to the sample.

SUGGESTED RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research can be replicated by using a more representative sample of the population.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

As an institution the family continues to be a subject of intense and controversial public concern. This interest is generated, in part, by the lack of consensus on what its form and function should be (Staples and Mirande, 1980). Therapists are called upon to mediate family dynamics around concerns such as unmet expectations and unshared definitions (Dressel, 1990).

These unmet expectation and unshared definitions are often culturally related. They are also oftentimes unconscious to the couples themselves. The researcher believes it is vital that the social worker get a throughout social history on her/his clients and always be aware of the cultural aspect. The roles of spouse and parent are highly sex differentiated. Nowhere are the stereotypes that shape and define the responsibilities and rights of women and men more obvious than in the expectations surrounding the roles of wife, husband, mother, father (Balthazar, 1988).

One of the important responsibilities of the family therapist is the clarification of family roles.

Franklin (1980) maintains that black women and men have developed flexibility in family roles as a response to economic pressure. This flexibility extend to husband/wife roles. Adopting this flexibility has been a survival mechanism. Wives and husbands must be comfortable and happy with the roles they adopt or adapt in their marriage. The social worker therapist must be aware of his/her own perceptions and expectations of a spouse. She/he cannot tell a couple what they must do to have marital satisfaction. The worker must look at the relationship from the exchange perspective and provide guidance so that the couple can realize their strengths and enhance them; verbalize their expectations so that each knows how the other feels; discuss conflicts and make adjustments based on who they are and not based on another's plan or belief.

The researcher entered this study believing that age and education were significant contributors to marital satisfaction. Even though this was not verified, it would be well for the social worker therapist not to overlook these factors when counseling couples. Benin and Niensted (1985) suggest that

happiness is likely to be a changing process, with stage of the life cycle affecting one's happiness.

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March 25, 1991

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student at Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work. I am conducting a survey to obtain a more accurate picture of what African American men and women couples are really like and what things are important to them. I am also investigating the way men and women feel about their marital and inter-personal relationships. I would be deeply grateful if you would participate in this study by completing the attached questionnaire. If you decide you do not wish to participate in this research, please return the blank copy of the questionnaire.

I fully understand that the information I am seeking is both highly personal and sensitive, and I shall take every precaution to insure that no one will be able to recognize your individual response. Your answers will be anonymous and confidential.

I am confident that your voluntary participation in this research will make a significant contribution to the enhancement of clinical practice and research in the field of human relationships. Your participation will enable me to collect up to date information about the life styles and challenges facing African American couples today. If you would like a copy of the study findings, please give your name and address on a separate sheet of paper. I will be happy to provide you with the study findings as soon as they become available.

The attached questionnaire covers many topics, some or all of which may apply to your particular situation. Your time and care in completing this questionnaire is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Merrine M. Braggs
Merrine M. Braggs
Graduate Student

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Complete each item and/or circle the appropriate response.

1. Age: _____
2. What is your sex?
 1. Female
 2. Male
3. Marital Status:
 1. First marriage
 2. Second marriage
 3. Other
4. How long have you been married?

5. Number of children: _____
6. Number of children living at home: _____
7. Your highest level of education:
 1. Below 5th grade
 2. 6-8 Grade
 3. 9-11 Grade
 4. High School/GED
 5. Some college/Business school
 6. Bachelor degree
 7. Graduate degree
8. Are you employed?
 1. Yes
 2. No
9. What type of employment:
 1. Part time
 2. Full time
10. Spouse's highest level of education:
 1. Below 5th grade
 2. 6-8 Grade
 3. 9-11 Grade
 4. High School/GED
 5. Some college/Business school
 6. Bachelor degree
 7. Graduate degree

11. Is spouse employed?
1. Yes 2.No
- 12.What type employment?
1. Part time
2. Full time
13. Your yearly income:
1. \$12,000-16,999
2. 17,000-21,999
3. 22,000-26,999
4. 27,000-31,999
5. 32,000-36,999
6. 37,000+
14. Your spouse's yearly income:
1. \$12,000-16,999
2. 17,000-21,999
3. 22,000-26,999
4. 27,000-31,999
5. 32,000-36,999
6. 37,000+
15. What is your religion?
1. Baptist
2. Catholic
3. Methodist
4. Non Denomination
5. Other _____(specify)
16. What is your spouse's religion?
1. Baptist
2. Catholic
3. Methodist
4. Non Denomination
5. Other____(specify)
17. Number of times per month you attend services:_____
18. Number of times spouse attends services:_____
19. When you were growing up did your parents share the household tasks?
1. Yes 2. No 3. Sometime
20. How satisfied are you with your family life?
1. Satisfied
2. Somewhat satisfied
3. Very satisfied
4. Dissatisfied
5. Somewhat dissatisfied
6. Very dissatisfied
21. How often do you feel depressed?
1. Never
2. Once or more a year
3. Once or more a month
4. Once or more a week
5. Daily
22. How often do you feel overworked?
1. Never
2. Seldom
3. Often
4. Daily
23. How do you perceive your marriage?
1. Modern/Egalitarian
2. Traditional

SECTION B: HEALTH INFORMATION

Select the response that most accurately describes your situation concerning health.

1) Strongly Agree 2) Agree 3) Neither 4) Disagree 5) Strongly Disagree

24. My health is good _____
25. My health sometimes prevents me from doing household chores _____
26. My health poses no problem as far as any activities are concerned _____
27. My health prevents me from seeking paid employment _____

SECTION C: HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES

A few household responsibilities are listed below. Who in your household usually assumes responsibility for each chore listed? Please select the appropriate response.

1) I do 2) Spouse does 3) Children 4) Shared
5) Hired help

28. Meal preparation _____
29. Grocery shopping _____
30. Household cleaning _____
31. Household repairs _____
32. Handling auto repair and maintenance _____
33. Yard maintenance _____
34. Doing Laundry _____
35. Writing checks to pay bills _____
36. Deciding about major purchases _____
37. Deciding where you live _____

Household Chores - continued

- 1) I do 2) Spouse does 3) Children 4) Shared
5) Hired help

38. Deciding to relocate _____

39. Deciding how to spend the money _____

SECTION D: CHILD CARE RESPONSIBILITIES

A few child care responsibilities are listed below. Who in your household usually assumes responsibility for each task listed. Please select the appropriate response.

- 1)I do 2)Spouse does 3)Children 4)Shared 5)Other

40. Deciding what kind of child care to use _____

41. Making child care/babysitting arrangements _____

42. Taking children to and from school _____

43. Taking children to and from extracurricular activities _____

44. Provides discipline. _____

45. Staying home to care for sick children. _____

46. Taking children to doctor/dentist _____

47. Leaves work to care for child _____

SECTION E: WORK

The questions in this section have to do with employment. If you do not work, please go to section F. If you do work, select the response which most accurately describes your situation.

- 1)Strongly agree 2)Agree 3)Disagree 4)Strongly disagree

48. My job demands I work overtime frequently _____

49. My job demands overnight travel. _____

Work - continued

1)Strongly agree 2)Agree 3)Disagree 4)Strongly disagree

50. My job allows for flexibility of work hours _____

51. I would work even if I didn't need the money _____

52. I am able to handle work pressures and family responsibilities without any problems _____

53. My family does not get the attention it needs because of my work schedule. _____

54. I am trying to advance in my career _____

55. I work only because I have to _____

SECTION F: ATTITUDE ABOUT CHANGES

Ways that you might want to change your situation/family life are listed below. Please rank order the three most important changes you would like by indicating with the number "1" the most important change you might like to make, using the number "2" to indicate the next most important change and so forth.

56. I do not want to change my family life at all. _____

57. Get more help around the house. _____

58. Work part time. _____

59. Return to school for more education. _____

60. Improve my relationship with my spouse. _____

61. Improve my relationship with my children. _____

62. Sever my relationship with my spouse. _____

63. Improve my child care situation. _____

64. Other (Specify). _____

This questionnaire is designed to measure the degree of contentment that you feel about your life and surroundings. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Answer each item as carefully and accurately as you can by placing a number beside each one as follows:

- 1 Rarely or none of the time
- 2 A little of the time
- 3 Some of the time
- 4 Good part of the time
- 5 Most or all of the time

Please begin.

1. I feel powerless to do anything about my life _____
2. I feel blue _____
3. I am restless and can't keep still _____
4. I have crying spells _____
5. It is easy for me to relax _____
6. I have a hard time getting started on things
that I need to do _____
7. I do not sleep well at night _____
8. When things get tough, I feel there is
always someone I can turn to _____
9. I feel that the future looks bright for me _____
10. I feel downhearted _____
11. I feel that I am needed _____
12. I feel that I am appreciated by others _____
13. I enjoy being active and busy _____

14. I feel that others would be better off
without me _____
15. I enjoy being with other people _____
16. I feel it is easy for me to make decision _____
17. I feel downtrodden _____
18. I am irritable _____
19. I get upset easily _____
20. I feel that I don't deserve to have a
good time _____
21. I have a full life _____
22. I feel that people really care about me _____
23. I have a great deal of fun _____
24. I feel great in the morning _____
25. I feel that my situation is hopeless _____

This questionnaire is designed to measure the degree of satisfaction you have with your present marriage. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Answer each item as carefully and as accurately as you can by placing a number beside each one as follows:

- 1 Rarely or none of the time
- 2 A little of the time
- 3 Sometime
- 4 A good part of the time
- 5 Most or all of the time

Please begin.

1. I feel that my partner is affectionate enough ____
2. I feel that my partner treats me badly ____
3. I feel that my partner really cares for me ____
4. I feel that I would not choose the same
partner if I had it to do over ____
5. I feel that I can trust my partner ____
6. I feel that our relationship is breaking up ____
7. I fee that my partner doesn't understand me ____
8. I feel that our relationship is a good one ____
9. I feel that ours is a very happy relationship ____
10. I feel that our life together is dull ____
11. I feel that we have a lot of fun together ____
12. I feel that my partner doest't confide in me ____
13. I feel that ours is a very close relationship ____
14. I feel that I cannot rely on my partner ____
15. I feel that we do not have enough interests
in common ____

16. I feel that we manage arguments and disagreements very well _____
17. I feel that we do a good job of managing our finances. _____
18. I feel that I should never have married my husband _____
19. I feel that my partner and I get along very well together _____
20. I feel that our relationship is very stable _____
21. I feel that my partner is pleased with me as a sex partner _____
22. I feel that we should do more things together _____
23. I feel that the future looks bright for our relationship _____
24. I feel that our relationship is empty _____
25. I feel there is no excitement in our relationship _____

This questionnaire is designed to measure how you see yourself. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer each item as carefully and accurately as you can by placing a number by each as follows:

- 1 Rarely or none of the time
- 2 A little of the time
- 3 Some of the time
- 4 A good part of the time
- 5 Most or all of the time

Please begin.

1. I feel that people would not like me if they really knew me well. _____
2. I feel that others get along much better than I do _____
3. I feel that I am a beautiful person. _____
4. When I am with other people I feel they are glad I am with them. _____
5. I feel that people really like to talk with me. _____
6. I feel that I am very competent person. _____
7. I think I make a good impression on others. _____
8. I feel that I need more self-confidence. _____
9. When I am with strangers I am very nervous _____
10. I think that I am a dull person. _____
11. I feel ugly. _____
12. I feel that others have more fun than I do. _____
13. I feel that I bore people. _____

14. I think my friends find me interesting. _____
15. I think I have a good sense of humor. _____
16. I feel very self-conscious when I am with
strangers. _____
17. I feel that if I could be more like other
people I would have it made. _____
18. I feel that people have a good time when
they are with me. _____
19. I feel like a wallflower when I go out. _____
20. I feel I get pushed around more than others. _____
21. I thing I am a rathe nice person. _____
22. I feel that people really like me very much. _____
23. I feel that I am a likable person. _____
24. I am afraid I will appear foolish to others. _____
25. My friends think very highly of me. _____

The following items are designed to measure the amount of stress you are experiencing. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Answer the items as carefully as you can by circling the number to the right of each one as follows:

- 1 = rarely or none of the time
- 2 = a little of the time
- 3 = some of the time
- 4 = a good part of the time
- 5 = most or all of the time

Please begin.

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. I feel extremely tense. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. I feel very jittery. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. I feel like I want to scream. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. I feel overwhelmed. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. I feel very relaxed. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. I feel so anxious I want to cry. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. I feel so stressed that I'd like to
hit something. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. I feel very calm and peaceful. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. I feel like I am stretched to the
breaking point. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. It is very hard for me to relax. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. It is very easy for me to fall
asleep at night. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. I feel an enormous sense of
pressure on me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

13. I feel like my life is going very smoothly 1 2 3 4 5
14. I feel very panicked. 1 2 3 4 5
15. I feel like I am on the verge of a total collapse. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I feel that I am losing control of my life. 1 2 3 4 5
17. I feel that I am near a breaking point. 1 2 3 4 5
18. I feel woundup like a coiled spring. 1 2 3 4 5
19. I feel that I can't keep up with all the demands on me. 1 2 3 4 5
20. I feel very much behind in my work. 1 2 3 4 5
21. I feel tense and angry with those around me. 1 2 3 4 5
22. I feel I must race from one task to the next. 1 2 3 4 5
23. I feel that I just can't keep up with everything. 1 2 3 4 5
24. I feel as tight as a drum. 1 2 3 4 5
25. I feel very much on edge. 1 2 3 4 5